

# The Office of Refugee Resettlement



Photo courtesy of UNHCR

## A Year in Review: Fiscal Year 2010

This past fiscal year has been a busy one for the Office of Refugee Resettlement! During the past 12 months, ORR has reviewed its internal processes and programs, worked closely with stakeholders in the field, and collaborated with various offices within the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) in order to tackle issues facing those we serve.

ORR is committed to putting refugees at the forefront of all our decisions. We are working to make sure that we leverage all our resources to ensure that mainstream organizations like the Departments of Labor, Education, Housing, and others understand who refugees are and recognize them as individuals, as families, as students, and as business owners.

During the past few months, I have traveled nationwide visiting numerous refugee organizations. In addition, I'm pleased to report that the ACF Assistant Secretary joined me on my trips to Texas, Florida, Chicago, and Minnesota. These visits enabled us to hear directly from refugees and their families, and discuss the challenges they are facing,

including finding employment and concern about refugee youth disenfranchisement. And this week, Acting Assistant Secretary David Hansell and I will travel overseas with the U.S. State Department to visit Amman, Jordan and Nairobi, Kenya. We will meet with UNHCR and CDC officials, visit overseas processing entities and refugee camps, and take part in refugee interviews. This is the first time an ACF delegation has traveled overseas to visit a refugee camp.

In addition, for the first time in history, the HHS Secretary not only attended ORR's national consultation this past June, but also attended the 2011 Refugee Admissions Consultations with the House and Senate Judiciary Committee this fall. Traditionally, only the Secretary of State attends this admissions meeting, but this year, both Secretary Sebelius and Secretary Clinton attended.

I believe these visits and meetings speak volumes about the Department of Health and Human Services' commitment to refugees and the resettlement process.

ORR made it a goal this past year to

think strategically and be as creative as possible when it comes to solving the challenges we all face. For example, in a shift from our previous way of thinking, we reviewed the methodology ORR used to allocate social services and targeted assistance formula funds to States. We realized that it did not provide the most accurate snapshot of refugee arrival data – and that is why in FY 2010, we modified the number of retrospective arrival data years to focus on the populations that arrived within the most recent 24 months (from FY 2008-2009).

We believe this proposal serves as a first step in being responsive to the needs of refugees and grantees, all while providing transparency and verification of actual arrival data used to allocate funds.

We also increased the amount of funding for the PY 2010 Matching Grant program from \$60 million to \$65.3 million, so that we could compensate for an increase in refugee arrivals. The approved increase will enable over 29,000 clients to be served by Matching Grant.

Also, ORR just awarded a \$500,000 cooperative agreement grant to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health to provide training and technical assistance for health and mental health. Typically, smaller grants have been awarded for technical assistance but ORR feels the importance of providing appropriate health and mental health services to refugees is so critical that a significant amount of funding was needed.

We believe these new adjustments in ORR will have a substantial impact in addressing many of the needs raised by our stakeholders during the past year. We look forward to working with you all in the coming year!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eshkinder Negash".

Eshkinder Negash, Director

# ORR Program Accomplishments in 2010

During the past fiscal year, 73,311 refugees, 14,887 asylees, 11,048 entrants, and 2,075 Iraqi and Afghan Special Immigrant Visa holders were eligible to receive ORR benefits and services.

In FY 2010, ORR awarded a total of \$171 million in discretionary grants. Of this, \$47 million was awarded to states via 120 grants, and \$124 million was awarded to non-profit organizations and the discretionary components of the Wilson-Fish program and the nine Matching Grant awards.

Below are descriptions of several ORR programs and their successes this past year.

## ***Repatriation***

ORR's Repatriation program, which provides temporary assistance to American citizens and their dependents who have been identified by the State Department as having returned, or been brought, from a foreign country to the U.S. because of destitution, illness, war, threat of war, or a similar crisis, embarked on one of the most complex emergency evacuation responses in recent U.S. history.

From January 14 through February 20, 2010, our program provided assistance to approximately 28,000 U.S. citizens and others repatriated from Haiti due to the catastrophic earthquake. ORR worked in collaboration with New Jersey, South Carolina, Florida, and Maryland to provide services to repatriates who arrived on one of the 835 flights during a 38-day period. In addition, the unaccompanied Haitian children whose adoptions had not been completed in Haiti prior to their arrival in the U.S. were placed in the custody of ORR. Since

January, over 640 children were released by ORR to prospective adoptive parents.

## ***Unaccompanied Refugee Minors***

Through its network of caretakers, ORR offered specialized foster care to unaccompanied refugee minors (URM), designed to meet their special needs and to help them develop social skills to enter adulthood. This past fiscal year, 1,240 youth were served in the URM program. In addition, in FY 2010, ORR saw an increase of a newly eligible group of youth – those who have a Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS). The William Wilberforce Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008 made certain youth (those granted SIJS by the Department of Homeland Security) eligible for the URM program. Youth with SIJS were found to have been abused, abandoned or neglected by one or both parents, and reunification with the parents was not deemed viable. In FY 2010, ORR approved the eligibility of 141 youth with SIJS for the URM program.

## ***Refugee School Impact***

This past fiscal year, ORR awarded \$15 million in 36 grants under the Refugee School Impact two-year grant program. The projects will facilitate parental involvement, and offer bilingual/bicultural counselors and interpreter services to approximately 26,000 children per year. Overall, 30 states received additional funding from the previous fiscal year.

## ***Anti-Trafficking in Persons***

In addition to offering comprehensive case management to foreign victims of human trafficking and supporting public awareness and outreach campaigns

to help identify victims, ORR also certified victims. Certification makes them eligible to receive federally funded benefits and services to the same extent as refugees so that victims can rebuild their lives safely in the U.S.

In FY 2010, 449 certifications were issued to adult victims of human trafficking and 92 eligibility letters were issued to child victims.

## ***Microenterprise***

In FY 2010, the Microenterprise program was funded at \$4 million for 18 grantees, operating in 15 states. Collectively, these programs served more than 3,000 refugees by providing business training and pre-loan/post-loan technical assistance. The grantees were also able to leverage an additional \$2.5 million from other sources. Approximately 750 refugee entrepreneurs received loans to start a new business or expand/strengthen an existing business.

## ***Unaccompanied Alien Children***

ORR funded care provider facilities nationwide to provide a safe environment for unaccompanied alien children (UAC) until they were reunified with family members or sponsors in the U.S., repatriated to their home country by immigration officials, turned 18 years of age, or received immigration relief. The children received classroom education, health care, mental health services, and case management. In addition, under a \$6.1 million contract with the Vera Institute, ORR expanded the Legal Access Project to provide legal services to all UAC in ORR care.

In FY 2010, there were 7,509 new placements of UAC into ORR care.



# ORR Program Accomplishments in 2010

## ***Refugee Agricultural Partnership***

Effective partnerships with USDA agencies and private organizations have resulted in nine of 10 past RAPP grantees and other network agencies receiving USDA assistance or other grants, including local-funded support for refugees to improve production in community gardens or on small-scale farms, to sell produce, access healthy and familiar foods, and better adjust to their communities.

In FY 2010, 14 organizations received three-year RAPP project grants, focused on diverse strategies of doing production, marketing produce, and improving nutrition and health of refugee clients. These RAPP projects were funded at \$1,037,000.

First Lady Michelle Obama visited a RAPP-funded garden of the International Rescue Committee in San Diego, and was quoted as saying, "This is a model for the nation, a model for the world."



Photo by Mike Blake/Reuters

## ***Matching Grant***

The voluntary agencies' Matching Grant Program is an alternative to public cash assistance designed to enable refugees, asylees, and other ORR eligible populations to become self-sufficient through employment and intensive case management, within 120 to 180 days from date of arrival in the U.S. and/or date of eligibility for ORR services. Matching Grant is offered at 237 locations in 43 states and Washington, D.C.

Achieving economic self-sufficiency during challenging economic times has been difficult. Nonetheless, for the reporting period ending September 30, 2010, this program was able to boast 57% self-sufficiency at 120 days and 68% self-sufficiency at 180 days.

## ***Individual Development Accounts***

During FY 2010, ORR's IDA program awarded \$4.7 million to 22 grantees in 20 states. Consequently, grantees were able to provide financial literacy training to over 2,000 refugees, including asset-specific training such as home ownership, financing education, and business planning. Grantees provided approximately \$3 million for asset purchases to refugees, assisted refugees in leveraging ORR funds to purchase assets in excess of \$5 million, and assisted hundreds of refugees in accessing post-secondary education and training.

Additionally, ORR signed an MOU with the Office of Community Services' Assets for Independence (AFI) program to implement a two-pronged approach to increase

IDA access to refugees. This includes contracting with technical assistance providers with extensive refugee experience to assist refugee-serving organizations in obtaining AFI funding, and to assist AFI grantees reach more refugees.

## ***Communications Outreach***

ORR has made it a priority to increase its communications efforts. Not only does ORR want to keep friends and colleagues aware of what we are doing, but ORR wants to make sure that we help external audiences understand who refugees are, what refugees have overcome, and what refugees have accomplished in our country.

ORR now distributes electronic newsletters that discuss recent ORR activities, highlight various offices within ACF and HHS that serve refugees and other vulnerable populations, and provide updates on ORR grants and funding opportunities.

In order to be transparent in our funding and to make sure that we are sharing pertinent information with all of our stakeholders, ORR created an online State Programs Annual Overview that highlights ORR programs and funding in each state. This includes the state-administered programs, ORR discretionary grants, service providers, and the Matching Grant and Wilson-Fish programs.

Also, the ORR Director now speaks with a different State Refugee Coordinator every week and will continue to do so. It is extremely important for ORR to hear from those working on the front lines each and every day.